/9 cont./

867 the blue skies... and so it is, day after day. These very same examples of unpunished robbery and violence, repeated daily, must leave deep traces in the conscience of the observant young shepherd. Upon his return home, phenomena he has observed in nature are consolidated and, as it were, sanctified in his eyes by the authority of the older members of the family: every day there are discussions and squabbles about the loss or stealing of cattle; on the one hand, he hears words of praise and approval applied to stealing, and, on the other hand, curses addressed to the thief; finally he sees how the housewife, the lawfulness of whose behavior he has never once thought of doubting, very cautiously digs up the buried meat of an animal stolen from the neighbors and cooks it... And when the child, grown wise by
867 observing his mileu and by the successful experiences of his
579 relatives, /10/ matures into a grown youth, his parents and the leading members of the family in general provide him with arms, having given him their blessing beforehand with the words: "Now make your own living, make your fortune by thievery and robbery, the same as all the people your age." Hence, thievery here has not only the status of an example worthy to be followed when the proper occasion presents itself; it is presented as an obligatory modus vivendi, as a dogma, sanctioned by the authority of the parents and of the older members of the family in general.

867 Let us turn our attention to still another circumstance. As
579 is well known, children love fairy tales and all kinds of stories
538 and legends. In the long winter nights, the old men and women tell stories to the Abkhaz children. But the majority of such tales are likewise harmful from the point of view of moral influence, for the contents of these legends, fairy tales, and stories go no further than eulogies of stealing, robbery, and raiding; in them are sung the praises of the daring, determination, and bravery of some "abrag" (abrek = bandit), of his resourcefulness as a thief, his keen-wittedness when in difficulties, his audacity in robbing and seizing another man's property. This may provide a partial explanation of the regrettable phenomenon in the life of the Abkhaz, that even persons who have had a modicum of secondary education

/13 cont./

576 enter a house is decided with the same ceremoniousness. Or, for example, when two horsemen meet each other in the forest. If the younger of the two has something to say to the older one, he must dismount and speak while standing on the ground. At that point, the older one urges him to speak without dismounting.

/14/ The language of the Abkhaz also bears witness to their politeness. In conversation they often use such expressions as: "I ask that your sickness will pass on to me," "may I become the victim of your sicknesses," "may I be the victim instead of you," "may I go around the place where you are lying," etc. In keeping with this last expression, an Abkhaz woman, when visiting her sick foster-child or a person she has not seen for a long time, walks three times around him with the words, "utsge mtsuge seizgat," i. e. "may I carry away your sickness, your misfortune."

[608] [755]

For every occasion in life, the Abkhaz has a special greeting, in which are expressed his wishes for prosperity, strength, victory, fertility, profit, etc. In this repertoire of various Abkhaz greetings, there are even some which are especially meant for occasions when one meets persons who are going to a horse-race, greetings for the person who is arranging the races, and so forth. And this is quite understandable and natural for a people such as the Abkhaz, for whom horse and arms constitute the most beloved things, which they have been accustomed to value highly almost from the cradle. The children of members of the upper classes in the very first years of their lives become excellent riders and weapon-bearers. Pistol, dagger, saber, knife, and a whole arsenal of weapons are the constant adornment of every Abkhaz man. For him there is no greater pleasure than to ride armed from head to foot, a burka thrown over him, in the company of his comrades, singing a merry song. Without a horse and arms, life is not worth living to an Abkhaz!

181 [565] [411] [293]

Besides horse-races and trick-riding, the following games are worth noting in the life of the Abkhaz: 1. the ball-game, 2. arkil-riki, and 3. stone-throwing. The folk-music and folk-poetry of the Abkhaz are extremely meager.

526 [541] 538

/18 cont./

III.

Education -- The Educated -- The Educators

565 While the upper class in Abkhazia enjoyed privilege and
566 power, the situation of the lower classes was one of great oppression; /19/ the batoni (master, feudal lord) looked upon his subject, his slave, as a commodity; he could sell or pawn him
[567] according to circumstances. However, even after the abolition
[579] of slavery, the position of the peasantry did not improve, due to the fact that the nobility did not cease from robbery and pillage and plunder until the most recent times.

565 Under such a state of affairs, all the peasantry could do
608 was to resign itself to feudal conditions and try, wherever possible, to get protection. The best method lay in the custom of adoption, or the rearing of the sons of the aristocrats by the peasants. Thanks to this custom, the aristocrats themselves were strengthened, for in this way they gained in the peasants their most faithful supporters, while at the same time freeing their wives from the onerous duty of bringing up and feeding their own children. This is the reason that in all Abkhazia there is not a single peasant who has not reared one or several princes and nobles; as a consequence of this custom, hardly one per cent of the nobles have been nursed at their own mother's breast.

Before the beginning of childbirth in a family of the aristocracy (didebuli), on the one hand relatives and acquaintances and, on the other hand, the future foster-mothers of the expected child, accompanied by their husbands and female relatives in order to be able to bear the newborn foster-child back to their village with due ceremony, begin to gather around the pregnant
344 woman. During the childbirth, girls from the village also come to
565 visit the expectant mother in order to distract her and to relieve
[533] her sufferings during labor with gay songs and the telling of fables
[538] and fairy tales. The husband is absent during this time. According to the customs of the country, he is not allowed to be present when his wife gives birth and therefore leaves the home. Above

[772 cont.]

C 533 Art and play. The old traditions of the past and of the deeds of the Cherkess were preserved by the wandering minstrels (gegwako); they used to sing of them at feasts and festivals, whereas nowadays they present hardly anything but songs of congratulation and praise and comic songs. As far as is known, the A 538 folk literature of the Abkhaz is rich in religious and festive songs and prayer formulas, and probably also in heroic and other

A [534]

Fig. 452. Guitar with two strings, Abkhaz (1/7 natural size) (Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg).

A 534 songs. As accompaniment to the singing, a two or three-stringed guitar is used (Abkhaz, ap'khirtsa, see Fig. 452) or the Mingrel lute (atšangur), the handle of which is sometimes carved or shaped in the form of a head. In addition, the C 534 Cherkess still use long flutes (tšebizga) of reed or metal, with three finger-holes, and triangular harps (pšine-duk-okyo), which also occur among the Swan; they are 20 to 70 centimeters wide and have 40-centimeter-long hair strings attached to the resonator and to pegs above.

A 535 The favorite dance among the Abkhaz is the "shoulder-dance," in which the young people hold each other by the hand, [773] turn around as they sing, and from time to time leap in C 535 the air. Among the Cherkess there were girls' dances (denyola), in which they hopped in one place, round dances of men and girls (uk) combined with singing, and wild war-dances (kofa) performed by a single fully-armed man.

A 526 The principal amusements of the men are contests of strength, stone-casting, ball-throwing, and the like. The Abkhaz used to fight duels with the sword, usually while sitting

3: Janashia I-5 (ca. 1900) 1937 RI3 Abkhas RI3
Adzvibzha

THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE ABKHASIANS

(From the materials on Abkhasian ethnography)

By N. S. JANASHIA

[A translation of the article published in *Khristianskii Vostok*, The Christian East, Petrograd, 1915, vol. iv, No. 1, pp. 72–112.]

FOLLOWING the suggestion of N. Y. Marr that I should revise and translate into the Russian language my notes on "Materials on the ethnography of the Abkhasians", published 16–17 years ago in Georgian periodicals, chiefly in the journal *Moambe*, I made a careful review of all the collected "Materials", whether printed or still in manuscript form. In order to make the revision more complete I invited the aid of a special Commission from the Abkhasians of the village Adzvibzha, where the materials in question were actually collected. 114

The Commission consisted of the following persons: Mrs. Gidcha Janashia, my mother, with whose help the materials were checked originally; Kharikhan Tchengelia; Kelamat Delba, an eighty-year-old man, possessing a perfect knowledge of Abkhasian; Abdakhw Lolua, an orator; Alexis Dopua, who has a wide knowledge of tales and legends; Mushagw Tchengelia; and Alexis Janashia. The Commission worked with me for two days, the 2nd and 3rd July, 1914. 115

Furthermore, being still doubtful about certain aspects of my task, I checked the materials again at the meeting of the Adzvibzhuaans, during the month of August, and I found that all agreed in the main, differing only in matters of detail. One of my chief difficulties was that members of the Commission refused point blank to tell me tales I wanted to have in connection with my object, because "it is forbidden to tell tales in the daylight!" I therefore found it very hard to verify tales I had formerly taken down. So strong is the power of superstition nurtured for centuries! I am convinced that much that is incomprehensible in my "materials" would have been susceptible of explanation in the light of these tales. 124 [538] [128]

All the ceremonies and rites herein presented are described by a man who has taken an active part in their observance; at first, during his childhood, when he was imbued with profound religious feeling, and later in life when, although no longer professing "faith", he approached them with the greatest interest with a view to their study. I have endeavoured to record all the details, discovering in them curious survivals preserved through the popular beliefs and customs of the Abkhasians. In my opinion these details represent invaluable material for the scientific study of religious observance. 123

I was at one time very much tempted to use the material I had 121